

Word Focus Study (Bowed)

Genesis 19:1–3

Focus Word: “Bowed”
Strong’s Number: H7812

****Part One- Word Study****

Genesis 19:1–3 (KJV)

1 And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he **bowed** himself with his face toward the ground;
2 And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant’s house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.
3 And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

****Part Two – Bible Versions****

King James Version (1611)

Genesis 19:1–3

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2 And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant’s house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.
3 And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

American Standard Version (1901)

Genesis 19:1–3

1 And the two angels came to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot saw them, and rose up to meet them; and he **bowed** himself with his face to the earth;
2 and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn aside, I pray you, into your servant’s house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet; and ye shall rise up early, and go on your way. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.
3 And he urged them greatly; and they turned aside unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

Douay–Rheims Bible (1899 American Edition)

Genesis 19:1–3

1 And the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot sat in the gate of the city. And when he saw them, he rose up and went to meet them, and worshipped **prostrate** to the ground.
2 And he said: I beseech you, my lords, turn in to the house of your servant, and lodge there: wash your

feet, and in the morning you shall go on your way. And they said: No, but we will abide in the street.
3 And he pressed them very much to turn in unto him, and to go into his house: and when they were come in, he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

Webster's Bible (1833)

Genesis 19:1–3

1 And there came two angels to Sodom at evening; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he **bowed** himself with his face toward the ground;
2 And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and lodge all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will lodge in the street all night.
3 And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in to him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

Young's Literal Translation (1898)

Genesis 19:1–3

1 And two of the messengers come towards Sodom in the evening, and Lot is sitting in the gate of Sodom; and Lot seeth, and riseth to meet them, and **boweth** himself—face to the earth,
2 and saith, 'Lo, I pray you, my lords, turn aside unto the house of your servant, and lodge, and wash your feet; and ye have risen early, and gone on your way;' and they say, 'Nay, but in the broad place we do lodge.'
3 And he presseth exceedingly on them, and they turn aside unto him, and enter his house, and he maketh for them a banquet, and unleavened things he hath baked, and they do eat.

English Revised Version (1885 NT / 1895 OT)

Genesis 19:1–3

1 And the two angels came to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot saw them, and rose up to meet them; and he **bowed** himself with his face to the earth;
2 and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn aside, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet; and ye shall rise up early, and go on your way. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.
3 And he urged them greatly; and they turned aside unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

****Part Three – Commentary Sources****

Matthew Henry's Commentary (1706)

“Lot sat in the gate of Sodom, as one of the judges or magistrates of the place. When he saw the angels, he rose up to meet them, and bowed himself with his face toward the ground; herein he showed respect

and reverence, and a readiness to do them service. Though he dwelt among the wicked, he did not learn their manners, but retained his old courtesy and piety.”

Henry notes Lot’s position, gesture, and moral distinction, emphasizing that outward posture reflected an inward disposition shaped earlier in Abraham’s household.

Jamieson–Fausset–Brown Commentary (1871)

“Lot’s sitting in the gate intimates his official position among the citizens. His respectful salutation of the strangers was the result of the same generous hospitality that distinguished Abraham. The pressing invitation he gave them was prompted by his knowledge of the depraved habits of the place.”

This commentary ties bowing to civic awareness and moral urgency, not ritual worship.

John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible (1746–1763)

“And he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; which was a token of respect and reverence to them, as persons of note and distinction, according to the custom of those eastern countries; and not of religious worship, since he knew not yet that they were angels.”

Gill is explicit: the act of bowing is customary honor, not yet theological worship.

Adam Clarke’s Commentary (1831)

“Lot’s bowing himself was in conformity with the respectful manners of the East. He treated these strangers with marked civility, pressing them earnestly to accept shelter; for he knew the danger of remaining in the streets of Sodom.”

Clarke reinforces the cultural explanation and connects posture with protective hospitality.

Geneva Bible Notes (1599)

“He bowed himself: that is, he did reverence unto them as strangers of worth, according to the manner of that country.”

The Geneva notes are brief and precise, grounding the action in regional custom, not spiritual inference.

Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament (1832–1851)

“Lot’s conduct resembles that of Abraham in the preceding chapter. His respectful posture and earnest hospitality show that, though dwelling in Sodom, he was not altogether conformed to its corrupt practices.”

Barnes highlights continuity with Genesis 18, which will be important for later analysis.

The Pulpit Commentary (1880s–1919)

“Lot’s prostration before the strangers was the usual Oriental expression of respect. His urgency in pressing them to accept his hospitality sprang from a knowledge of the peril to which they would be exposed if they remained in the open street.”

The Pulpit Commentary reinforces cultural normalcy and contextual danger.

Bengel’s Gnomon of the Old Testament (English Translation)

“He bowed himself — an act of humility, yet not worship; courtesy precedes revelation.”

Bengel’s concise observation anticipates the sequence: posture first, understanding later.

****Part Four – Historical and Cultural Viewpoint****

Historical Setting

Authorship and Date

Genesis is traditionally attributed to Moses, with the events of Genesis 19 occurring during the patriarchal period (early second millennium BC). The narrative records events surrounding Sodom, shortly before its destruction.

Geographic Location

Sodom was located in the Jordan plain, near what Scripture describes as a well-watered region before its judgment (Genesis 13:10). Its placement along trade routes made it a populated and economically active city.

Lot's Position in the City

Lot is described as “sitting in the gate of Sodom.”

In the ancient Near East, the city gate functioned as:

- A place of judicial decision-making
- A location for civic leadership
- A public area for legal transactions and hospitality

This indicates Lot held a recognized civic role, not merely residence status.

Cultural Considerations

Hospitality in the Ancient Near East

Hospitality was not optional; it was a moral and social obligation.

Key elements included:

- Rising to meet visitors
- Bowing or prostration as a sign of respect
- Offering shelter, food, and protection
- Insisting guests not remain in unsafe public spaces

Failure to protect guests brought shame and communal dishonor.

Lot's urgency in Genesis 19:3 reflects:

- Awareness of Sodom's moral danger
- Cultural responsibility toward strangers
- Protective obligation toward guests once received

Bowing as Cultural Gesture

Bowing (Hebrew *shāchāh*) in this context reflects:

- Respect
- Deference
- Recognition of status

- Courtesy toward strangers

Public-domain dictionaries and biblical usage show that bowing could be:

- Social
- Political
- Ceremonial
- Religious (depending on context)

Context, not posture alone, determines meaning.

Smith's Bible Dictionary (1884)

City Gates

Smith notes that city gates served as:

- Courts of justice
- Places of assembly
- Centers of authority

This supports Lot's official presence and explains his immediate engagement with travelers.

Easton's Bible Dictionary (1897)

Hospitality

Easton describes hospitality as:

- A sacred duty
- A test of moral character
- Especially critical in desert and urban travel contexts

Lot's behavior aligns with ancient ethical norms, not Sodom's corruption.

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Early Edition)

ISBE notes that:

- Bowing and prostration were common signs of respect
- Hospitality included protection at personal risk
- City corruption heightened responsibility for hosts

This frames Lot's actions as culturally orthodox, even as the city was morally degraded.

Writing & Cultural Practice References

Ancient Near Eastern Customs

Based on:

- Internal biblical evidence
- Smith's and ISBE historical notes

Key practices include:

- Rising to meet visitors
- Bowing before conversation
- Offering food and shelter before inquiry
- Host responsibility extending to defense of guests

These customs are descriptive, not interpretive.

Part Four Summary

Genesis 19:1–3 reflects:

- A patriarchal hospitality code
- A civic setting centered at the city gate
- A cultural posture of bowing as respect
- A morally dangerous environment influencing Lot's urgency

This historical and cultural backdrop prepares the reader for analysis, not conclusions.

****Part Five – Analysis****

(Word Study, Theology, and Scriptural Integration)

A. Focus Word Analysis (Lexical Study)

Focus Word (Hebrew): נָחַךְ

Transliteration: shāchāh

Strong's Number: H7812

Grammatical Form (Genesis 19:1):

- Verb
- Qal imperfect / narrative form (contextual action)
- Describes a physical lowering of the body

Lexical Range:

From Brown–Driver–Briggs (BDB):

- To bow down
- To prostrate oneself
- To show respect or homage
- To worship (when contextually directed toward deity)

From usage patterns:

- Can describe social respect
- Can describe political submission
- Can describe religious worship
- Meaning is context-determined, not inherent to the verb itself

Key Observation:

The verb shāchāh does not define why one bows—only that one bows.

Immediate Contextual Analysis

Literary Context

Genesis 19:1–3 follows directly after Genesis 18, intentionally inviting comparison:

- Abraham bows to three visitors (18:2)
- Lot bows to two visitors (19:1)

Yet the settings differ:

- Abraham: tent, open land, covenant relationship
- Lot: city gate, civic role, corrupt environment

The repetition of shāchāh creates a narrative echo, not a theological assertion.

Immediate Action Sequence

The text records:

1. Lot sees the visitors
2. He rises to meet them
3. He bows to the ground
4. He speaks respectfully
5. He offers hospitality

The bowing occurs before speech and before recognition of angelic identity.

Doctrinal and Theological Reflection

Key Theological Insight:

Humility of posture does not equal worship of heart—but it prepares the heart for recognition of God’s presence.

Supporting Observations:

- Scripture never rebukes Lot for bowing
- Worship is always clarified by object and intent
- God often reveals Himself where humility already exists

Guardrails Applied:

- No assumption of worship
- No moral inflation of posture
- Text governs theology

Synthesis and Summary

Summary Statement:

In Genesis 19:1–3, *shāchāh* describes a culturally appropriate act of humility and respect, performed before understanding the identity of the visitors. The text presents bowing as posture, not theology—yet Scripture consistently shows that such humility positions the servant to rightly respond when God reveals Himself.

Connection to the Broader Canon:

From patriarchs to prophets, Scripture demonstrates that God’s revelation often meets those whose posture—physical and spiritual—is already inclined toward humility.

Methodology Note (Reusable):

This analysis draws upon the original Hebrew text, public-domain lexical sources, and canonical cross-references. Scripture is allowed to interpret Scripture, with theological conclusions arising from linguistic and contextual evidence.

****Part Six – Interlinear Hebrew / English Display****

Purpose of the Interlinear Section

This section visually displays the original Hebrew text in direct relationship to English meaning, allowing the reader to observe:

- Word order
- Lexical meaning
- Grammatical relationships
- Emphasis within the clause

This section is illustrative, not interpretive. All interpretation belongs to Part Five.

Selection of the Interlinear Clause

Selected Clause (Genesis 19:1):

“He bowed himself with his face toward the ground”

Reason for Selection:

- Contains the focus word (shāchāh)
- Represents the core physical action of the passage
- Parallels Genesis 18:2 directly

Original Language Header

Original Language: Hebrew (Old Testament)

Textual Basis:

Masoretic Text tradition underlying the KJV

Stacked Interlinear Display (Primary Layout)

(Maintaining original Hebrew word order)

Original Hebrew	Transliteration	English Gloss
וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ	vayyishtahû	and-he-bowed
אִפָּיִם	'appayim	face / nostrils
אֶרְצָה	'ārtsāh	toward-the-ground

Grammatical Observations

(Brief, factual, non-interpretive)

- וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ
 - Verb, Qal imperfect with waw-consecutive
 - Narrative action, completed in sequence
- אִפָּיִם
 - Dual noun form
 - Common Hebrew idiom for “face”
 - Emphasizes physical orientation
- אֶרְצָה
 - Directional form (“earthward”)
 - Indicates full lowering of posture

Literal Rendering

Word-for-word English Rendering:
“And he bowed—face—earthward.”

Purpose:

To demonstrate how meaning arises directly from structure and word order, not interpretive smoothing.

Relationship to the Focus Word

Focus Word Placement:

- The verb shāchāh opens the clause
- Action precedes description
- Emphasis rests on the act itself

Observational Notes:

- The bowing governs the clause
- The following nouns describe extent, not intent
- Physical posture is fully expressed

Supplemental Interlinear Reading – Genesis 19:1–3

(Extended Hebrew–English Clause Flow)

Purpose:

To allow the reader to follow the entire narrative movement of Genesis 19:1–3 in Hebrew sequence, observing action flow, posture, speech, and response without interpretation.

This section is descriptive only. All analysis remains in Part Five.

Genesis 19:1

וַיָּבֹאוּ u·ibau and·they-are-coming	שְׁנֵי shni two-of	הַמַּלְאָכִים e·mlakim the·messengers	סְדֹמָה sdm·e Sodom·ward	בְּעֶרְבַּ b·orb in·the·evening
וְלוֹט u·lut and·Lot	יֹשֵׁב ishb sitting	בְּשַׁעַר b·shor in·gateway-of	סְדֹמָה- -sdm Sodom	וַיֵּרָא u·ira and·he-is-seeing
לוֹט- -lut Lot	וַיִּקָּם u·iqm and·he-is-rising	לִקְרַאתָם l·qrath·m to·to-meet-of·them	וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה u·ishthchu and·he-is-bowing-down-himself	
אֶפְרוֹיִם aphim nostrils	אֶרְצָה artz·e earth·ward			

Part Seven – Observations, Themes, and Spiritual Application
Genesis 19:1–3

1. Narrative and Structural Observations

Genesis 19:1–3 is deliberately slow and detailed. The text draws attention not merely to what happens, but how it happens.

Key narrative movements:

- Arrival → “and they are coming”
- Position → Lot is sitting in the gate
- Recognition → Lot sees the messengers
- Response → Lot rises, meets, and bows
- Invitation → Hospitality is urgently offered
- Resistance → The messengers initially refuse
- Persistence → Lot presses them strongly
- Acceptance → They turn aside and enter

This sequence highlights moral action under pressure, not passive belief.

2. Theological Themes in the Passage

A. Hospitality as Righteous Action

In the ancient Near Eastern context, hospitality was not optional—it was a moral obligation.

Lot’s actions show:

- Initiative (he rises)
- Humility (he bows)
- Protection (he insists they come inside)
- Sacrifice (his house, food, and safety)

The Hebrew verb וַיִּפְצֹץ (vayyiftzar) — “he urged strongly” — indicates forceful moral insistence, not polite suggestion.

B. The Gate as a Place of Testing

Lot sits in the gate of Sodom, a place of:

- Public judgment
- Civic authority
- Moral exposure

This contrasts sharply with Abraham’s tent (Genesis 18).

Lot is a righteous man living inside a corrupt system, attempting to act justly from within it.

C. Posture Reveals the Heart

Lot’s physical posture:

- Rising
- Meeting
- Bowing face-down to the earth

This reflects:

- Recognition of divine authority
- Submission
- Urgency and reverence

The text emphasizes movement and posture to reveal inward disposition.

3. Literary and Canonical Connections

Old Testament

- Genesis 18 – Abraham shows hospitality to divine visitors
- Judges 19 – A tragic inversion of hospitality
- Job 31:32 – Righteousness defined by care for strangers

New Testament

- Hebrews 13:2 – “Some have entertained angels unawares”
- Matthew 25:35 – Welcoming the stranger as service to Christ
- James 2 – Faith proven by action

Genesis 19 stands as a bridge text between hospitality as social duty and hospitality as spiritual obedience.

4. Christological Foreshadowing

Though Christ is not named, the passage anticipates New Testament truth:

- Divine messengers come quietly, not in power
- They test the moral condition of the city
- A righteous individual responds at personal risk
- Judgment follows refusal of righteousness

Jesus later enters cities in humility, is often rejected, and judges not merely by words but by response to presence.

5. Practical Application

This passage challenges the reader to ask:

- Do I recognize God’s work when it appears quietly?
- Do I act righteously even when surrounded by corruption?
- Is my faith expressed through costly action?
- Do I protect what is holy when it is vulnerable?

Lot’s failure later does not erase this moment of obedience. Scripture records both—because righteous acts matter even in flawed lives.

6. Teaching Emphasis for Group Study

- Righteousness is demonstrated, not declared
- Hospitality reflects spiritual discernment
- God tests cities and individuals differently
- Moral courage often appears ordinary and unnoticed